

USCIRF Issues Policy Document Opposing UN Defamation of Religions Proposal

<http://religionclause.blogspot.com/2009/11/uscirf-issues-policy-document-opposing.html>

The **U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom** yesterday issued a new Policy Focus publication titled: The Dangerous Idea of Protecting Religions from "Defamation"; A Threat to Universal Human Rights Standards. The Executive Summary reads in part:

Although touted as a solution to the very real problems of religious persecution and discrimination, the OIC-sponsored UN resolutions on this issue instead provide justification for governments to restrict religious freedom and free expression. They also provide international legitimacy for existing national laws that punish blasphemy or otherwise ban criticism of a religion, which often have resulted in gross human rights violations. These resolutions deviate sharply from universal human rights standards by seeking to protect religious institutions and interpretations, rather than individuals, and could help create a new international anti-blasphemy norm.

The United Nations General Assembly is expected to vote shortly on this year's version of the resolution on Combating Defamation of Religions (full text) sponsored in the General Assembly's Third Committee by Syria (on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference), Belarus and Venezuela.

UPDATE: Europe News reported on Nov. 12 that the OIC has written a letter (full text) to the Chairman of the U.N. Committee on Complementary Standards defending its defamation of religions proposal against charges that it infringes on freedom of expression.